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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A jet propelled watercraft comprising:

an engine having at least one throttle valve, the throttle valve being movable between an idle position and a fully open position;

a throttle operator remotely positioned relative to the engine and coupled to the throttle valve, the throttle operator being movable between first and second positions whereby the throttle operator causes the throttle valve to move between the idle and fully open positions, respectively; and

an engine control system comprising a first sensor configured to detect an operating state of the watercraft or the engine, a second sensor configured to detect a position of the throttle operator, a throttle valve control mechanism including an actuator cooperating with the throttle valve under at least one operating state of the watercraft or the engine, and a controller communicating with the first and second sensors and with the throttle valve control mechanism, the controller being configured to activate the throttle valve control mechanism once the operating state of the watercraft or engine is greater than a predetermined state and to leave active the throttle valve control mechanism at least when the throttle operator quickly moves to the first position so as to maintain the throttle valve between the idle and fully open positions.

2. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the throttle operator is coupled to the throttle valve by a throttle drive mechanism, and the actuator is coupled to the throttle valve independently of the throttle drive mechanism.

3. The watercraft of Claim 2, wherein the throttle drive mechanism comprises a throttle pulley.

4. The watercraft of Claim 3, wherein the throttle drive mechanism additionally comprises a cable linking the throttle operator to the throttle pulley and a biasing member arranged to bias the throttle operator towards the first position.

5. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the first sensor is an engine speed sensor configured to output a signal to the controller that is indicative of engine rotational speed.

6. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the first sensor is a watercraft speed sensor configured to output a signal to the controller that is indicative of a vehicle speed of the watercraft.

7. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the first sensor is a throttle valve position sensor configured to output a signal to the controller that is indicative of the position of the throttle valve.

8. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the controller is configured to activate the throttle valve control mechanism once the operating state of the watercraft or engine is greater than a predetermined state for a preset period of time.

9. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein throttle valve control mechanism is configured to maintain the throttle valve open to a degree corresponding to a trolling condition of the watercraft.

10. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein throttle valve control mechanism is configured to maintain the throttle valve open to a degree corresponding to a transient condition of the watercraft between a displacement mode of operation and a planing mode of operation.

11. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the engine control system additionally comprises a steering angle sensor, and wherein the controller is configured to deactivate the throttle valve control mechanism so as to permit the throttle valve to return to an idle position when a steering angle is less than a preset degree.

12. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the controller and the throttle valve control mechanism are configured to maintain the throttle valve at a preset position between the idle and fully open positions.

13. The watercraft of Claim 1, wherein the controller and the throttle valve control mechanism are configured to retard movement of the throttle valve from a preset position, which lies between the idle and fully open positions, to the idle position.

14. The watercraft of Claim 13, wherein the controller and the throttle valve control mechanism are configured to gradually decrease the opening degree of the throttle valve at least over a range of movement between the preset position and the idle position.

15. A jet propelled watercraft comprising:

an engine having at least one throttle valve, the throttle valve being movable between a closed position and a fully open position;

a throttle operator remotely positioned relative to the engine and coupled to the throttle valve, the throttle operator being movable between first and second

positions whereby the throttle operator causes the throttle valve to move between the closed and fully open positions, respectively; and

an engine control system comprising a first sensor configured to detect an operating state of the watercraft or the engine, a second sensor configured to detect a position of the throttle operator, a throttle valve control mechanism including an actuator cooperating with the throttle valve under at least one operating state of the watercraft or the engine, and a controller communicating with the first and second sensors and with the throttle valve control mechanism, the controller being configured to activate the throttle valve control mechanism once the operating state of the watercraft or engine is greater than a predetermined state, and the controller and throttle valve control mechanism further being configured to delay closure of the throttle valve at least when the throttle operator quickly moves to the first position.

16. The watercraft of Claim 15, wherein the controller and the throttle valve control mechanism are configured to maintain the throttle valve at a preset position between the closed and fully open positions.

17. The watercraft of Claim 15, wherein the controller and the throttle valve control mechanism are configured to retard movement of the throttle valve from a preset position, which lies between the closed and fully open positions, to the closed position.

18. The watercraft of Claim 17, wherein the controller and the throttle valve control mechanism are configured to gradually decrease the opening degree of the throttle valve at least over a range of movement between the preset position and the closed position.

19. The watercraft of Claim 15, wherein the first sensor is an engine speed sensor configured to output a signal to the controller that is indicative of engine rotational speed.

20. The watercraft of Claim 15, wherein the first sensor is a watercraft speed sensor configured to output a signal to the controller that is indicative of a vehicle speed of the watercraft.

21. The watercraft of Claim 15, wherein the first sensor is a throttle valve position sensor configured to output a signal to the controller that is indicative of the position of the throttle valve.

22. The watercraft of Claim 15, wherein the controller is configured to activate the throttle valve control mechanism once the operating state of the watercraft or engine is greater than a predetermined state for a preset period of time.

23. The watercraft of Claim 15, wherein the engine control system additionally comprises a steering angle sensor, and wherein the controller is configured to deactivate the throttle valve control mechanism so as to permit the throttle valve to return to an idle position when a steering angle is less than a preset degree.

24. A method of controlling a watercraft having an engine, comprising sensing a first control parameter indicative of the operating state of the watercraft or the engine, sensing a position of an operator used to control engine speed to determine at least when the operator is abruptly moved to an idle position, activating a throttle valve control mechanism when the operating state of the watercraft or engine is greater than a preset operating state, and maintaining engine speed above an idle speed when the operator is abruptly moved to the idle position when the watercraft or engine is operating above the preset operating state.

25. The method of Claim 24, wherein maintaining engine speed above an idle speed involves gradually decreasing the engine speed from a preset engine speed, which lies between the idle speed and the speed of the engine when the operating state of the watercraft or the engine is greater than the preset operating state, toward the idle speed at least over a range of speeds between the preset speed and the idle speed.

26. The method of Claim 24, wherein maintaining engine speed above an idle speed involves holding the engine speed at a preset engine speed above the idle speed.

27. A method of Claim 26, wherein the preset speed is less than the speed of the engine when the operating state of the watercraft or the engine is greater than the preset operating state.

28. The method of Claim 24, wherein sensing a first control parameter involves sensing engine speed.

29. The method of Claim 24, wherein sensing a first control parameter involves sensing the vehicle speed of the watercraft.

30. The method of Claim 24 additionally comprising ceasing maintenance of an engine speed above idle once a preset period of time has elapsed.

31. The method of Claim 30 additionally comprising sensing a steering angle of a steering operator of the watercraft, and ceasing maintenance of an engine speed above idle when the steering angle is less than a preset degree.